The AAU Practice Committee (PU AAU)

Regulations

OBJECTIVE AND DEFINITION

Regulations for the investigation of allegations of questionable research practice

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Part 1: General provisions

Objective and basis

1. For the investigation of allegations of questionable research practice and preliminary investigations of allegations of research misconduct, the Rector appoints a practice committee for Aalborg University (termed the AAU Practice Committee in this document).

2. The AAU Practice Committee has been appointed to contribute to ensuring that allegations of questionable research practice are dealt with and to ensure a coordinated dialogue with the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct.

3. The AAU Practice Committee reports to the Rector, but operates independently of the University management.

4. In all its activities, the AAU Practice Committee will observe acknowledged standards for good research practice. The standards stipulated in the Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity will form the basis. In addition, other current institutional, national and international practices and guidelines for research integrity will be taken into account.

Part 2: Appointment and scope of the AAU Practice Committee

Appointment of committee members and alternates

5. The Practice Committee consists of five committee members, one from each AAU faculty. For every member, one alternate member will be appointed.

(2) After consultation in the Academic Council, each dean (or a person authorised by the dean) recommends one committee member and one alternate for appointment by the Rector.

(3) Committee members and alternates are appointed for a four-year period and are eligible for reappointment for another four-year period.

6. As a general rule, committee members and alternates must meet the following requirements:

1) must have tenured employment at AAU at associate professorship level as a minimum;
2) must have a minimum of 10 years’ work experience after receiving their PhD degree;
3) must be an active researcher; and
4) must have experience supervising PhD students, assessing PhD theses from AAU and other universities, peer reviewing for academic journals and preparing project applications for research councils, foundations, etc.

7. Committee members and alternates may not be employed in the line management, doctoral school management or be members of academic councils, since they may have to impose sanctions based on the investigations of the AAU Practice Committee.

8. The Rector will appoint a chair and a deputy chair among the committee members.

Appointment of ad hoc members

9. For the investigations of each specific allegation from a faculty, the dean (or a person authorised by the dean) must recommend an ad hoc member. Ad hoc members are appointed by the Rector. Each dean may determine specific procedures for recommending ad hoc members.

(2) The appointment of ad hoc members must ensure that the AAU Practice Committee possesses the relevant disciplinary expertise.

(3) Heads of doctoral schools may not be appointed ad hoc members in cases involving PhD students
from their doctoral school.

10. In the event of conflict of interests or long-term absence of committee members or alternate members, additional ad hoc members must be appointed to ensure that all allegations are considered by three members from the faculty from which the case originates.

The responsibilities and scope of the AAU Practice Committee

11. The AAU Practice Committee is responsible for:

1) Investigating allegations of questionable research practice. Allegations of questionable research practice are defined as:

   a) an allegation related to a scientific product (a scientific article, PhD thesis, etc.) written on the basis of research conducted at Aalborg University which is outside the scope of the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct or has been dismissed by the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct.

2) Forwarding allegations of fabrication, falsification or plagiarism within the scope of the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct for further investigation.

3) Assisting the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct when needed.

4) Preparing and submitting an annual report to the Rector, the Academic Councils and the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct on allegations investigated by the AAU Practice Committee.

5) Suggesting specific development requirements at Aalborg University to promote compliance with the Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.

6) Conducting such development processes if these do not belong elsewhere in the organisation and writing reports on these.

12. The preliminary investigation of an allegation submitted to the AAU Practice Committee will be conducted by an executive committee comprising the chair and the alternate member from the faculty from which the case originates.

   (2) The executive committee may discuss the case in writing or at meetings as determined by the chair.

13. The AAU Practice Committee will determine their rules of procedure, which must be approved by the Rector.

The responsibilities and scope of the AAU Practice Committee members

Chair

14. The chair is in charge of the activities of the AAU Practice Committee. In the event of a tied vote, the chair has the casting vote.

15. The chair is in charge of the activities of the executive committee and, on the basis of the preliminary investigation, may decide:

1) in consultation with the relevant dean and head of department and following a concrete assessment, to request for the head of department to secure any materials and place restrictions on the respondent’s access to laboratories, materials, data, etc.;

2) to initiate a screening of materials including a scientific assessment hereof;

3) to initiate other essential preliminary investigations to determine whether the case should be assessed according to the Danish act on research misconduct or;

4) to dismiss the allegation as manifestly unfounded.

Deputy chair

16. In the event of a conflict of interests or long-term absence of the chair, the deputy chair will act as chair.
Committee members

17. Committee members are permanent members of the AAU Practice Committee and participate in the procedures for investigation and contribute to any consultative or development activities.

(2) In the event of conflicts of interests or long-term absence of alternate members, committee members will take their place in the executive committee of the AAU Practice Committee.

Alternate members

18. Alternate members will constitute permanent members in cases originating from the faculty with which they are affiliated. In this context, the alternate and the chair of the AAU Practice Committee will comprise the executive committee of the AAU Practice Committee and will contribute to the investigation of the allegation.

(2) In the event of conflicts of interests or long-term absence of committee members, alternates will take their place in the AAU Practice Committee.

Ad hoc member

19. Ad hoc members are appointed to assist in the investigation of an allegation within their area of expertise.

Part 3: Procedure for investigation

Allegations

20. Allegations, cf. section 11(1) and (2), may be submitted to the AAU Practice Committee by anyone who may have reasonable grounds for suspecting any cases of research misconduct or questionable research practice conducted at Aalborg University.

(2) If brought to the attention of the AAU Practice Committee that there may be reasonable grounds for suspecting any cases of research misconduct or questionable research practice, cf. section 11(1) and (2), the Committee must investigate the matter on their own initiative.

21. A person who wishes to clear their name of rumours or allegations, cf. section 11(1) and (2), may request for the AAU Practice Committee to investigate these allegations.

Information

22. The allegation must include information on the following:

1) information on the scientific product, which is the subject of the allegation;
2) the named researcher(s) or academic staff member(s) against whom the allegation is made;
3) the allegations made of research misconduct or questionable research practice; and
4) the reasons for the allegations made.

(2) In the event that the allegation does not contain the information required for initiating the investigation, cf. 22(1), the complainant must be informed that this may lead to the allegation being dismissed in reference to the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct, cf. ‘Lov om videnskabelig uredelighed m.v’ [the act on research misconduct], section 11(3).
23. The AAU Practice Committee meets six times annually to review allegations.

(2) The chair may decide for regular meetings to be cancelled if no allegations have been submitted to the AAU Practice Committee or the chair may call additional meetings when relevant.

24. The AAU Practice Committee may review allegations at meetings where at least two of three members of the faculty from which the case originates are present and at least two other members, including the chair and the deputy chair, are present.

(2) Decisions will be taken by a simple majority vote. In the event of a tied vote, the chair has the casting vote.

25. The AAU Practice Committee may decide for a specific allegation to be investigated parallel to a related allegation under investigation by the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct.

Deadlines

26. To the extent possible, allegations submitted to the AAU Practice Committee must be completed within a period of no more than 12 months.

(2) To the extent possible, decisions to dismiss an allegation must be made within a period of no more than three months.

Dismissals etc.

27. The AAU Practice Committee may dismiss allegations:

1) if the allegation is considered to be manifestly unfounded;
2) if the allegation is considered not to lead to a decision on questionable research practice;
3) if the costs associated with investigating the allegation are not proportionate to its importance; or
4) if the allegation has little connection to Denmark or Aalborg University.

28. If the AAU Practice Committee considers an allegation not to fall within their scope or that of the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct, the AAU Practice Committee may decide that an allegation is to be processed by other units or other parts of the line management at Aalborg University.

Statement and decision

29. The AAU Practice Committee concludes its procedures for investigation, cf. section 11(1), by submitting a statement including a reasoned opinion on whether the allegation constitutes research malpractice.

(2) Where the AAU Practice Committee cannot reach an agreement, a note of dissent must be included as a separate part of the statement.

(3) The statement must be submitted to the Rector.

30. Where the AAU Practice Committee dismisses an allegation, cf. section 27, and decides that an allegation be investigated by other units or other parts of the line management at Aalborg University, cf. section 28, or decides that an allegation be investigated by the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct, the reasons for such decisions must be included in the statement.

(2) Where the AAU Practice Committee cannot reach an agreement, a note of dissent must be included as a separate part of the statement.

Appeals

31. Statements and decisions made by the AAU Practice Committee cannot be appealed against.
32. These regulations will enter into force on 1 July 2017 and will apply to allegations reported after this date.

(2) When relevant, the AAU Practice Committee will submit a recommendation to the Rector for the amendment of these regulations.

Aalborg University 30 June 2017
Per Michael Johansen
Rector

ORIGIN, BACKGROUND AND HISTORY
This procedure is prepared by a task force, composed of administrative employees from the Rector’s Office and from the faculties’ offices. The procedure is prepared according to “Scheme for reorganisation of The Practice Committee’s structure at AAU”, which is approved by the management May 24, 2017, and later approved by the academic councils.

OVERALL FRAMEWORK
This procedure is connected with “Procedures for the Practice Committee (PU AAU)” and “Regulations of research misconduct” - https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=188780

CONTACT/RESPONSIBILITY
The Rector’s Office

DEFINITIONS

APPENDIX
Form for reporting research misconduct or questionable research practice here